TO MY FRIEND

Mrs. [illegible]

AS A FELLOW WORKER FOR THE CAROLINA THAT IS TO BE, I SEND THIS WITH MY COMPLIMENTS AND GOOD WISHES.

Clarence Poe

THE NORTH CAROLINA OF TO-MORROW

By CLARENCE POE

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THE NORTH CAROLINA OF TOMORROW

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By Clarence Poe.

That lamented son of Greensboro, Mr. Robert C. Hood, whose untimely taking-off brought to many of us a sense of personal loss, wrote on the day of his death an article which describes with rare penetration and insight the temper and capacity of our average North Carolinian. The object of this article, which proved to be his farewell message to the State he loved, was to urge that our next Governor should give his entire term of office to a Currituck-to-Cherokee crusade in behalf of rural improvement, better roads, public health, and the development of new ideals of beauty and civic pride in our cities and hamlets. Mr. Hood then used one expression to which I wish especially to direct attention. "Many of our people," he said, "are lacking in knowledge of the better way of doing things; many of them lack experience," and then added this memorable sentence: "But just about all of them are capable of doing anything they set their minds to, and it is largely a matter of getting their minds properly set."

There in two sentences, as I see it, we have an epitome of North Carolina conditions today. We have a capable people, but a people lacking as yet in aspiration and ideals, a people who have not yet been awakened to the majesty of their own possibilities and the possibilities of the State in which they live.

It is a subject in keeping with this clear-sighted patriot's analysis of conditions, namely, the need for vision in the development of the North Carolina of tomorrow, the dynamic and practical value of an ideal in commonwealth-building, that I wish to emphasize tonight. And if such a subject seem to you less practical than those to which I usually give attention, I hope before I shall have concluded, to convince you of your error.

I am the more inclined to discuss this topic because, as a reading of the statement of purposes of this organization shows, its founders sixteen years ago declared that one of its chief objects should be "the engendering of an intelligent and healthy State pride" among our people. And such a pride, I maintain, in a State so young as North Carolina—a State whose soil was but yesterday the wilderness hunting-ground of a savage race—must be based not only on what her people have achieved in the

past, but upon faith in the splendor of her future. Take any group of seventeen-year-old schoolboys, and we may have pride in their achievements, but the mainspring of such a pride is not in what they have already done, but in the tokens of character and ability assuring far worthier work in the years of their maturity. And so with a State so young that the lightwood-knots in her oldest cultivated fields have hardly yet decayed: we may rejoice in the virtues her people have proved and in the heroic deeds that have brought fame to her sons and daughters, but it is when we confidently proclaim "that which they have done but earnest of the things they yet shall do" that our eyes kindle with the keenest pride and exaltation. With us any authentic and wholesome State pride must look forward as well as backward, or perhaps I should say, must look backward only in order more confidently to look forward.

In beginning my address, therefore, I wish to lay down three principles as being fundamental to "the engendering of an intelligent and healthy State pride" such as the founders of this organization yearned to promote among our people, three principles fundamental to such a development as patriotic North Carolinans of the temper of Mr. Hood have longed for through all the patient decades of our history:

1. We must have an ideal for the North Carolina of tomorrow—an ideal exalted and ennobling.

2. We must have faith in the triumph of that ideal.

3. There must be a mobilization of all the forces in the State that look for the realization of this ideal.

I. THE NEED FOR AN IDEAL.

My first appeal tonight, my friends, my first plea to you who really love North Carolina, and who love her I trust with a passionate and eager love, my first concern is that we shall set up a worthy ideal for our people and give them a vision of how great a State, how mighty a Commonwealth, it is possible for us to build here. We must see that we have not yet aspired greatly enough. In the matters of faith and imagination, one feels that we have indeed chosen but a few herbs and apples while the immortal destinies offer us whatsoever royal gifts we will—"bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all."

It is as true of States as of the persons who compose them, that they will achieve only in proportion to the splendor of their ideals, the earnestness with which these ideals are held, and the faith and zeal with which the ever-toilsome quest of an ideal is pursued. What President Wilson has said of the individual, "No man who does not see visions will ever realize any high hope or undertake any high enterprise," was of old declared true of nations by the inspired writer: "Where there is no vision the people perish." "Great nations," as a modern writer has said, "are built on great ideas."

Let us reflect, therefore, and ask ourselves to what extent our statesmen, orators, and teachers have held up to our people a vision of the possibilities for commonwealth-building here in North Carolina. Who has loved the State passionately enough and has believed in her profoundly enough to proclaim that we, "the heirs of all the ages in the foremost files of time"—that we may well achieve in the providence of God, a civilization as rich, as varied, as fruitful of sublime influences on all after-ages, as any that men in any other land or era have wrought out—England, Scotland, France, Germany, Greece, or Rome?

"The great use of a friend," says Emerson, "is to make us do what we can"; and today the great use of friends and lovers of North Carolina is to make her do what she can—to open the eyes of her people to their possibilities and engender in them a faith in their capacity to make these possibilities actualities. As surely as "the ancestor of every action is a thought," so surely is the ancestor of every great achievement a great ideal. Not without reason has it been said, "Let me write the songs of a nation and I care not who makes its laws," because however unworthy the laws of today may be, let but the seed of dynamic aspiration find lodgment in a people's heart and that aspiration will tomorrow body itself forth irresistibly in statutes and customs. Mr. George W. Russell, the Irish poet-philosopher, in a stimulating article on "The Antecedents of Civilization," has declared that "a civilization is the externalization of the soul and character of a people," and it is great and majestic according to the treasure of beauty, imagination, will and thought, laid up in the soul of the country. On all nations and all individuals, he continues, "is laid the necessity to make their external life correspond in some measure to their interior life"; so that a man of artistic soul will never be content to live in an ugly house, an intellectual man in a disordered society, or a man of high moral character in an environment in conflict with his inner ideals. Nor can I refrain from quoting here and substituting our word North Carolina for his word Irish, a further paragraph so applicable to our own conditions:

> We must go on imagining better than the best we know. Even in their ruins now, Greece and Italy seem noble and beautiful with broken pillars and temples made in the day of their glory. But before there was ever a white marble temple shining on a hill it shone with a more brilliant beauty in the mind of some artist who designed it. Do many people know how that marvelous Greek civilization spread along the shores of the Mediterranean? Little nations owning no more land than would make up a North Carolina county sent out colony after colony. The seed of beautiful life they sowed grew and blossomed out into great cities and half-divine civilizations. Italy had a later blossoming of beauty in the Middle Ages, and travelers today go into little Italian towns and find them filled with masterpieces of painting and architecture and sculpture, witnesses of a time when nations no larger

than a North Carolina county rolled their thoughts up to heaven and mixed their imagination with the angels.

One resplendent ideal we must at least set up; on one far-off divine event we must at least fix our gaze as the end of all our striving—remembering that though—

> The goal may ever shine afar,
> The will to win it makes us free—

and that sublime purpose, constant as the North Star in our heavens, must be to build here in North Carolina a civilization passionate with aspiration for all the noblest qualities that have found expression in the worthiest civilizations of the past—the beauty that was Greece, the majesty of the law made incarnate in Rome, the reverence and spiritual earnestness which distinguished the Hebrew people, the passion for liberty and democracy which has characterized our English ancestors and kinsfolk, the triumph of scientific efficiency of which Germany now furnishes an unforgettable demonstration.

This, then, is my appeal and summons to you, my fellow-workers for the greater North Carolina of tomorrow—to you who make her literature, whether as writers of books or as those unrecognized makers of literature who send out her dailies and weeklies from a hundred towns and hamlets; to you men of research who interpret the lessons of her history; to you teachers who have the instruction of her youth; to you men of the professions and of public station, who have the ear of her men and women—my appeal to you one and all is that you fail not to bring the vision of her potentialities before the sons and daughters of the State. In the language of that distinguished son of North Carolina who now represents this Nation at the Court of St. James, I would have us "look forward to a golden age that we may surely hasten, not backward to one that never was." I would have us believe with Shelley, that "the world's great age begins anew," that here and now a loftier Argo shall cleave the main, a brighter Hellas rear its mountains, while—

> Another Athens shall arise,
> And to remoter time
> Bequeath like sunset to the skies
> The splendor of its prime.

II. FAITH IN NORTH CAROLINA'S ABILITY TO ACHIEVE OUR IDEAL.

Only one thing, my friends, can hinder North Carolina on its march to such an imperial destiny, and that is the fault for which the Master of Life oftenest reproached men when He was on earth. That fault was lack of faith in God and lack of faith in themselves as heirs to an

Almighty Father's majesty and power; spiritual inertia. How tremendous and significant was His rebuke, "Had ye but faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye could remove mountains." We need some man to electrify North Carolina with that sublime confidence with which Kant incited Germany to high endeavor, and epitomized in the famous sentence, "Thou canst, for thou shalt." We need seers to look forward to North Carolina's future as Milton peered into England's future in the famous lines beginning: "Methinks that I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam."

In this spirit, for myself, I proclaim my North Carolina "Credo," and the reasons for the faith that is in me:

I believe in North Carolina, in her coming awakening, in the glory of her destiny; I believe that whatever of good or beauty or nobleness men in any other land or era have wrought, we, men and women, of North Carolina today and tomorrow, in the providence of God, may here and now achieve.

1. I believe this, first, because the history of other countries gives warrant for this high faith. In the language of another: "We have all that any people ever had to inspire them—the heavens above us, the generous earth beneath, and the breath of life in our nostrils." And though man, by taking thought cannot add a cubit to his physical stature, mere will has added incalculably to man's mental or moral stature, and civilizations have been built by the mere will to build them. Every one realizes that it was a group of enthusiastic leaders firing and moulding the national conscience and consciousness, who created modern Germany. "The national being," as has been said, "was enriched by a long succession of mighty thinkers. A great subjective life preceded a great objective manifestation of power and wealth." "To release from inertia and set in motion *moral power*"—that, says Kuno Francke of Harvard, was the purpose of the Stein-Hardenberg legislation; and he quotes Frederick William III., himself, as describing it as the effort of the State "to replace, by spiritual agencies, what it had lost in physical resources." However much we may differ as to the nobleness of the ideal, we may not doubt that it was by patient and never-ceasing insistence upon such an ideal that the German nation has been made what it is. And so today the visions of George W. Russell and Sir Horace Plunkett are slowly remaking Ireland, just as surely as the visions of Grundtvig remade Denmark, and the faith of Mazzini, Cavour, and Garibaldi made modern Italy. And if it be asserted, as I heard a man of national reputation recently remark in casual con-

versation, that North Carolina has been "a commonplace State," if it be true that the State has not shone above her sisters in "the sudden making of splendid names," I answer again in the words of our Irish poet-philosopher:

> The most famous peoples have been obscure for centuries and without fame as our own people are, until somehow the keynote was struck which made them vibrate to one idea. For how many centuries were there herdsmen and rude rustics in ancient Greece before the dream came to animate the people? Out of what barbaric beginnings through unilluminated centuries came the magnificence of ancient Rome? If one little chemical is not added to the compound in the shell, it may be fired out of the cannon, but the shell will not burst. We want a national ideal mixed with our energies to set Ireland in a blaze.

2. In the second place, let me remind you that here in North Carolina we have not merely the advantages that all other men have in common with us, but we possess in unusual degree the physical and material basis for the building of a noble and opulent civilization. In point of total area North Carolina is greater than Greece or Scotland, with all their mighty contributions to history; greater than the combined kingdoms of Holland, Belgium and Denmark; greater even than imperial England itself with its thirty-four million souls, its earth-girdling realm and far-flung battle line. In agriculture, our resources are astounding; in manufactures our Piedmont country has advantages almost unrivaled; and while we lack mineral wealth, our almost matchless water-powers will be performing the herculean labors of an electric age long after the coal deposits of other States have been exhausted. Moreover, as official records show, Raleigh, Edenton, Charlotte, and Chapel Hill have the exact mean annual temperature of Rome; Greensboro and Weldon that of Florence; Wilmington is a degree cooler than Athens or Jerusalem, while Asheville's climate is practically that of London and Paris. Hence we have the same climate, we breathe the very airs, we are stimulated by the same tempered mingling of wind and storm and sun, in which men have not only wrought mightily in modern times, but in which in ancient days men in Greece and Rome and Palestine wrought out those civilizations which yet project themselves with imperial and compelling power into the lives of every Commonwealth and individual in Christendom—their poets, prophets and statesmen "the dead but sceptered sovereigns who still rule us from their urns." There can be no doubt about it, that with such resources in such an environment—aided by that scientific husbandry and aggressive industrialism which has already superseded the primitive ways of our pioneer days—we shall have wealth in plenty to support a culture of the highest type. Thomas Gray, two centuries ago, pointed out the two

things which had hindered England's development—first, illiteracy, in that Knowledge, rich with the spoils of time, had never been made accessible to her plain people; second, poverty, in that—

> Chill penury repressed their noble rage
> And froze the genial current of the soul.

North Carolina is now escaping not only from the first of these handicaps, but from the second also. Nor should I fail to add that, by reason of our growing wealth, made possible by our vast resources, the need for growth in ideals is all the more insistent and imperative. In wealth lies at once our power and our peril, in that wealth, like food, when taken beyond the power of wholesome assimilation, becomes a source, not of health and power, but of disease and disaster. Without a capable and progessive people, therefore, increasing wealth might mean only an exchange of the wholesome virtues of industrious poverty for the decadent manners of the uncultured rich—the "pride, fullness of bread and abundance of idleness," which the Almighty of old denounced as the iniquity of Sodom.

3. My next reason for faith in the North Carolina of tomorrow, however, is the belief that we have a people who exemplifying the significant motto of the Commonwealth—*"Esse quam videri,"* "To be rather than to seem"—will be misled into no extravagance of show and appearance, into no temptation to slothful ease. We have a capable people of the same stock as those who have built great civilizations in the past, and yet unspoiled: courageous as they have ever been, "tender and open," as they were in the colonial days described by Bancroft, "disciplined in frugality and patient of toil." There are those who say the record of these people has been marked by extreme conservatism, by a slowness of movement which will prevent them from acquiring the best in modern government and society, but I do not so read their history. They have not been rash, but in all matters affecting human rights and human progress they have ever been progressive rather than backward. North Carolina was certainly not conservative in colonial days, when her demands for liberty and progressive legislation made the life of every British Governor a sort of continuous nightmare. She was not conservative in the days of the Regulators, the stamp tax, and the tea tax. She was not laggard of heart or hand in the days of the Mecklenburg and Halifax Resolves. She was, as Governor Baldwin of Connecticut has recently pointed out, the first State to put into her Constitution a provision for public education, the first to provide for the secret ballot, and the first to abandon annual for biennial elections. And while her people were slow to adopt the Constitution of the United States, it was because they were so modern in their conceptions of

democracy that they delayed entering the Union until persuaded that it would properly safeguard fundamental human rights. Says Governor Baldwin: "They endeavored to make, and did make, the new government more closely a government of the people, before accepting its authority." Then for fifty years prior to the Civil War, North Carolina's record in public education, internal improvements, the extension of suffrage, etc., marked it as perhaps the most progressive of all the States laboring under the handicap of slavery. And while she did not rush into secession it was because her people were unwilling rashly to jeopardize human rights and constitutional liberty in order to defend the property rights of her slave-holding class.

Moreover, the record of the State since the Civil War, had I time to enter into details—our patient rebuilding from the debris of war and reconstruction, our progress since that time in education, temperance, agricultural and industrial development, to say nothing of political upheavals daring to the point of radicalism in their willingness to risk change—would prove equally fatal to the contentions of those who would believe us too slow-moving to grasp opportunity or adapt ourselves to changing circumstance. The stagnation that has marked certain periods of our history, if I judge aright, has been due to the handicap of illiteracy rather than to inertia. In other words, I feel that the people in those periods failed to use their powers, not from wilful slothfulness, but simply because those powers had not been set free by the liberating influences of education.

4. And this brings me to a consideration of one other historic trait of our North Carolina people which I regard as of the highest significance and highest promise. This is the fact that while the State has given the Nation and the world not one of "the few, the immortal, names that were not born to die," while she has produced no Washington or Jefferson or Lee or Calhoun, yet her plain man, her average citizen, the great masses of her people, have made a record which may indeed give us pride in her past and confidence in her future. In colonial days she had no individual Patrick Henry or Benjamin Franklin or Samuel Adams, but the plain, sturdy, homespun-clad people of Cape Fear. Mecklenburg, Alamance, Guilford, Halifax, and Kings Mountain, while lacking celebrated leadership, yet gave an account of themselves which better guarantees our future than the achievements of any possible half-dozen individuals could have done. And again, it is our proud boast, that when civil war came the record of the State was distinguished, not for a few great leaders, but for the courage and enduring heroism of that host of plain North Carolina privates, who, going "with songs to battle, straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow," furnished more men in killed and wounded than any other Southern State.

It is not without significance that the only monument in Capitol Square erected in recognition of services in the Civil War (Vance's is there by reason of his services as statesman rather than as warrior), is in honor of a private soldier.

5. And here we find another, and probably the strongest of all, reasons for faith in the North Carolina of tomorrow: that not only has our common man achieved notably, but that our government and people have always had faith in the common man; have had an unquenchably democratic spirit. North Carolina before the Civil War was notably more democratic than our neighbor States—a fact emphasized by its leadership in public education, under Calvin H. Wiley, at a time when other Southern States were indifferent and a Governor of South Carolina was even urging the Legislature to make appropriations for the University at the expense of the common schools, declaring that "one sun is better than a million stars." We have had among us less of the spirit which divides men of the same race and blood into classes; we have had less of the spirit which in some sections has made the wealthier five per cent of the population, the men and women upon whom were imposed the sacred duties of privilege and leadership, draw about themselves the robes of a Pharisaical and supercilious self-satisfaction while they damned the other ninety-five per cent as hopeless "poor whites"—until from that contemned class itself, emigrant to the West, the Union drew its supreme leader and the flower of the army that crushed the army in which my father fought. It is the glory of North Carolina that she has recognized in increasing measure the fact that the most authentic and accurate index to the power and possibilities of every boy and girl is found, not in the achievements or non-achievements of two or three immediate ancestors, but is found rather in his or her racial heritage—that there beats with the blood of every child born of our race the spirit of the long, long centuries of toil and struggle, achievement, discipline, moral restraint and spiritual aspiration which make up the body of Caucasian civilization, so that in a very real sense all men and women of the same race, inheritors of the same racial history, traits and tendencies, are indeed "created equal." However dormant or repressed may have been the ability of the father, North Carolina looks with confidence to every child through whose veins courses the blood of the race that has produced heroes and martyrs and poets and sages, men of vision and daring and achievement, builders of civilization and of empire, and her people realize that no one knows when or where or in whom the genius of that race may again "burst full-blossomed on the thorny stem of time."

For my own part, my friends, I am persuaded that with a stock so sturdy and capable, and with natural and social conditions so auspicious,

such an ultimate flowering of the genius of our people is inevitable; that not only shall we develop a civilization whose average level will be high, but that even as one generation in Virginia produced a Washington, a Jefferson, a Marshall, a Madison, a Henry, and a Monroe, so there will arise from some generation of our own people a group of North Carolinians who will as greatly and yet more variously enrich the annals of our race.

III. THE MOBILIZATION OF ALL THE FORCES INTENT UPON THE IDEAL.

The one other thing that remains for me to say is that if we are to achieve our high ambition, there must be a mobilization of all the forces that make for progress in North Carolina—finding spokesmen in all who write and teach and speak and preach, and best of all, in those who organize the people into anything that unites them in quest of common aims, whether women's clubs, farmers' clubs, chambers of commerce, corn and canning clubs, civic leagues, or what not. Our writers and editors must become as men inspired with a new faith and a new vision; our schools must become indeed "centers of idealism," dynamos of patriotism and culture such as the revolution-working schools of Denmark have been; our churches must awaken to the Heaven-imposed duty not only of transforming the souls of men, but of making that transformation manifest here in the establishment of that Kingdom for whose coming we are taught ever to pray. We must inspire even the humblest worker with a faith in the future of his State; the humblest boy in patched trousers, the humblest girl in her gingham dress, must be caught up in the sweep of our master-purpose and made to feel that he or she has a part in its realization.

We must learn this lesson from war—that what glorifies it and relieves the hideousness of it is the fact that then the life of the commonest man is identified with that of the State, every humblest soldier feels that he is keeping step to the drum-beat of the progress of his race; and we must redeem our governments from their traditional commonplaceness in time of peace, in that they have not inspirited this common man, that they have not caught him up in the surge of human progess, that they have been content to narrow their functions to the protection of property and the preservation of peace and have not organized the tremendous energies of the Commonwealth for the achievement of great ideals! This is really our supreme task—to evoke in time of peace that ardent love for the State, and for each county or community in which we dwell, which flames out so gloriously in the lowliest man in time of war. With such a spirit the North Carolina of our tomorrow, house by house, town by town, neighborhood by neighborhood, will clothe itself with myriad forms of intellectual and material beauty that

will keep time with the blossoming of noble ideals in the minds of individual men and women.

You probably recall what was said of Henry W. Grady when he died, that he was "literally loving a nation into peace," and so our need in North Carolina, and in each town or county, is a man great enough of heart and soul to love it into new ideals of beauty, faith, and noble endeavor. It might be well said of each individual town and of each individual county in which you live, my friends, as Gilbert Chesterton said recently of his little English town of Pimlico:

> It is not enough for a man to disapprove of Pimlico; in that case he will merely cut his throat or move to Chelsea. Nor certainly is it enough for a man to approve of Pimlico; for then it will remain Pimlico, which would be awful. The only way out of it seems to be for somebody to love Pimlico—to love it with a transcendental power. If there arose a man who loved Pimlico, then Pimlico would rise into ivory towers and golden pinnacles. If men loved Pimlico as mothers love children, arbitrarily, because it is theirs, Pimlico in a year or two might be fairer than Florence.

And then Mr. Chesterton concludes with one memorable and meaningful sentence: "Men did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because they had loved her."

Even so men will not love the North Carolina of tomorrow because she is great. She will be great because her sons and daughters love and have loved her—and loving her give their lives to her enrichment through practical service to the neighborhoods they dwell in and aid to all the inspiring movements of our teeming time.

In that glad day when such a spirit shall have been indeed engendered among all our people, you and I will no longer go about our unhallowed daily tasks without exaltation and without a sense of the nobleness and dignity of our existence and our labors. Rather, while we do the humblest work that shall make our community better and so make North Carolina better, while we cleave the prosaic stone or mix the unlovely mortar in the common round, we shall see with our mind's eye the glorious form and structure of the State that is to be, majestic as the columns of ancient Parthenon, beautiful as far-famed Taj Mahal with its matchless symmetry—the Commonwealth which the genius of our North Carolina people, under the guidance of God, shall yet evolve as the half-divine sum total of our individual labors.